

SENATOR CONNIE SIPE



NEW JOBS on the horizon for Hoosiers

While the country continues to resonate with the effects of the national recession, Indiana has made strong progress in job creation and economic development.

According to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Indiana's seasonally adjusted payroll in June of 2004 grew by 4,100 jobs. This is the sixth consecutive month Indiana has experienced employment growth in comparison to the same period last year.

And, more jobs are on the horizon. According to IU's Center for Econometric Model Research, Indiana will create about 44,000 new jobs by early next year.

The Indiana Department of Commerce has received 151 inquiries from site selection consultants requesting information about relocating to Indiana. This compares with 140 inquiries for the same period last year, indicating a growing interest in Indiana by companies looking to relocate or expand existing facilities.

- 44,000 -
Number of new
Hoosier jobs
expected by 2005

- 6 -
Consecutive
number of months
of job growth

- \$23 Million -
Investment by
American Signature
in the new LaPorte
county facility



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Dear Friends,

The latest statistics indicate that more than 43 million people are uninsured in the United States, and the cost and availability of quality healthcare is a growing concern for every American.

Living without health insurance is not just a symptom of unemployment. Working families, small business owners, and temporary employees suffer as well, with 80% of those uninsured living in a family with at least one family member employed full- or part-time.

In Indiana, an estimated 687,700 Hoosiers, or nearly 13% of the state's population, are uninsured. Health care costs to Hoosier companies have risen 10% from 2003.

I am very concerned that many Hoosiers do not receive the quality healthcare they need and deserve to maintain healthy and productive life styles and families.

As the General Assembly prepares for the 2005 legislative session, I encourage you to contact me or a member of my staff by calling toll-free 1-800-382-9467 ext. 2-9526 with any concerns you have regarding the rising cost of healthcare or other issues of importance to you. Together, I believe we can find the solutions to these problems and make a difference.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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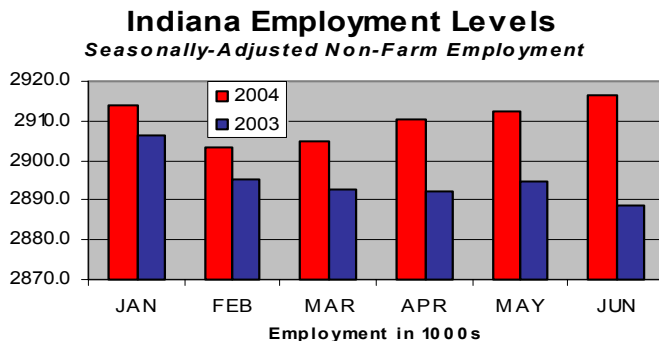
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REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 46
INCLUDING FLOYD AND CLARK COUNTIES

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Recognizing this growth, *Site Selection Magazine* reported in its May 2004 issue that Indiana received the “2003 Competitiveness Award” which is based on ten criteria tracking job and business growth each year. The Hoosier state earned 146 points, while second-place Kentucky earned 114. The award can be partly attributed to the passage of comprehensive tax restructuring legislation in 2002, which eliminated some business and inventory taxes and increased the research and development tax credit from 5 percent to 10 percent.

In 2003, the legislature made unprecedented investments in job creation activities, including a \$75-million investment in Indiana’s 21st Century Research and Technology Fund, the creation of a venture capital tax credit, and funding for certified technology parks. As a result, Indiana has leapt forward with a modern tax structure that attracts new businesses and encourages the expansion of current businesses.



Locally, the Heartland Call Center in Jeffersonville recently announced plans to add 185 new jobs to its current workforce of 295 over the next 18 months. The positions will pay an average wage of \$33,000 per year including benefits. The firm handles credit/debit card and payroll processing services for 80,000 businesses nationwide.

Indiana is making progress that is paying off in real jobs for Hoosiers. I will continue to work for the passage of progressive legislation to further Indiana’s economic development efforts.

Early Learning and School Readiness Commission begins work

The Early Learning and School Readiness Commission has begun its work to ensure that all Hoosier children receive the early educational experiences needed to succeed in school.

In May, Governor Kernan acted on a recommendation from Indiana’s Education Roundtable and established the commission by executive order. The order instructed the commission to assess the current resources available to children from birth to age six and to implement successful early learning and school readiness strategies.

In order to evaluate the state’s current resources, Lieutenant Governor Kathy Davis’ office has taken the lead in assessing all state services offered to children. The commission is also reviewing how other states assess local resources available in individual communities—both public and private. With this information, the commission will identify services currently provided and what populations are benefiting.

Additionally, the commission has divided its early education reform priorities into three separate categories:

- Pre-K – Kindergarten;
- Professional Development and Reading; and
- Collaborative Partnerships and Parents.

During its July 27th meeting, the commission developed its top three goals for Pre-K – Kindergarten:

- Supporting full-day Kindergarten for all children;
- Improving the quality and coordination of early education services including child care (home and center-based), preschool, and family support programs; and
- Ensuring every child has access to high quality school-preparatory services.

The commission will develop the top three goals in each of the other areas during the next two meetings.

The panel is charged with issuing an initial report to the Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction by December 31, 2004.

“Governor Kernan has done an excellent job assembling representatives from every area connected to early learning,” stated Sipes. “We have spent a great deal of time sharing our knowledge in order to do the best for Indiana’s early learners. I look forward to continuing our work and developing a plan that will help families in Indiana.”

Addressing the rising cost of prescription drugs

State programs help keep medications available to Hoosiers with low and fixed incomes

According to a recent study, approximately one out of three Americans under the age of 65 were without health insurance for all or part of 2002 and 2003. Even more Americans live without prescription drug coverage because their health insurance does not include drug coverage from their private or public benefit programs. AARP predicts that the rising trend in pricing will continue to concern and threaten the health of American consumers as these prices outpace inflation, a fact particularly troubling for those on modest and fixed incomes.

Serving the uninsured

During the past legislative session, I worked to enact House Enrolled Act 1251 to create a Regional Drug Repository Program. Now underway, this program organizes the collection and redistribution of unused prescription drugs to nonprofit health clinics serving

the uninsured, indigent, or underinsured. Pharmacies, health care clinics, and other facilities serve as repositories, accepting drug donations from health care providers, hospices, and hospitals. The donated prescription drugs are then available at a low or no cost to health

clinic patients under a physician's order. The program will provide a relief in prescription drug costs to state and federal programs that serve low income patients while increasing the availability of prescription drugs to those in need.

***1 out of 3
Americans under
65 were without
health insurance
in 2003***

Expanded discounts for Hoosier seniors

HoosierRx is Indiana's Prescription Drug Program for low-income seniors that provides discounts on prescription drugs for eligible seniors. Recent changes to the federal Medicare drug discount program have prompted changes in the state's HoosierRx program.



When using their HoosierRx Drug Card, enrollees will now receive a 75% discount off the cost of prescriptions. The new maximum benefit for current HoosierRx enrollees has been increased from

\$1,000 to \$1,200. New enrollees will also receive 75% off the cost of prescriptions, but maximum benefits will be based on when they apply.

If a senior is already enrolled in the HoosierRx program, it is in their best interest to also sign up for a Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card because it offers a larger discount. The HoosierRx Card can provide important supplemental assistance to seniors after they reach the maximum benefit of their Medicare-Approved Drug Card.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

HoosierRx

1-866-267-4679
www.in.gov/HoosierRx.

Medicare

1-800-633-4227
www.medicare.gov

How will Hoosier students pay for college?

The CollegeChoice 529 Investment Plan is a qualified tuition program that offers an exceptional opportunity to save and invest for the future college expenses of any Indiana child.

Indiana residents can enroll in the age-based investment option by calling 866-400-7526, or logging on to www.collegechoiceplan.com.

- ⇒ 60% of students have to borrow money to pay for their undergraduate degree
- ⇒ \$15,375 is the average student debt upon graduating from a four-year public university
- ⇒ 43,766 participants were in the CollegeChoice Plan as of May 2004



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Methamphetamine Abuse Task Force seeking solutions

The recently created Methamphetamine Abuse Task Force has begun work and brought together experienced individuals from law enforcement, social services, retail businesses, emergency response teams, courts, and the legislature. Subcommittees have been created in each specialty area and recommendations for realistic, effective, immediate and long-term solutions are forthcoming.

Education and coordination of law enforcement, emergency responders, and social service providers is essential for communities dealing with the growing public health threat of methamphetamine (meth). It is important that first responders who are called to the scene of a meth lab are able to identify it as such, contact police, and ensure the safety of bystanders.

Nearly all precursors used in the illegal production of meth are readily available in retail stores. Discussions have focused on methods of regulating the sale of pseudo ephedrine, an ingredient in most over-the-

counter cold medicines. This is the only component that is absolutely necessary in the production of meth. Suggested actions include enacting legislation to require pseudo ephedrine to be available by prescription only or requiring manufacturers to package the product with no more than 12 doses per package. Indiana law limits the sale of pseudo ephedrine to three boxes per customer, but some packages contain up to 96 doses.

The task force was created under House Enrolled Act 1136. A report of its findings and recommendations must be submitted to the Legislative Council by November 1.

If you suspect a meth lab in your community, contact your local law enforcement agency or report it to the Indiana State Police Meth Hotline at 1-800-453-4756. For additional information, the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute maintains a website with information on meth at www.in.gov/cji/meth.